

Illinois Central Railroad Company

The Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad Company

THE FACTS ABOUT THE SHOPMEN'S STRIKE



Prepared by

W. L. PARK

Vice-President & General Manager

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The Facts About the Shopmen's Strike

While the public generally is aware that a strike of railroad employes is in progress on certain western railroads, there are apparently few who are acquainted with the facts leading up to the dispute.

As the railroads are public utilities, everyone should know why there is a strike and the causes which brought it about. This applies to every employe now at work, those on strike and the public generally. One of the roads involved in the dispute is the Illinois Central. Ever since this railroad was built, it has been known as having the most friendly relations with its employes of any corporation in existence. It has always recognized organized labor and for many years has made contracts with the various unions of which its employes are members. It has gone to the extreme in the making of contracts in order that its employes might be satisfied and to continue the cordial feeling that has prevailed since its establishment. In fact, notwithstanding that its rates are of the lowest of those in the Eastern Group of railroads, its wages and working conditions are based upon those in effect in the Western Group. This means that they are the highest wages and carry with them the most favorable conditions to the employes. With these brief statements of facts, it may be well to proceed immediately to give in detail the causes of the present controversy, as it affects the Illinois Central.

For many years, the various unions of shopmen employed by the Company have made contracts covering wages, hours of employment and working conditions. Conferences to renew these contracts were looked for at stated periods and it was freely accepted as a part of the duty of the officials to meet the union committees and, in a friendly way, go over the changes desired and agree upon them amicably. So successful were these conferences that there has never been a strike on the Illinois Central based on a refusal of the Company to meet the employes' committees half way.

This was the condition of affairs when the Company officials in June, last, received a communication, signed by a car repairer and a railway clerk, notifying them that a System Federation had been organized and that, as soon as the demands decided upon could be printed, a conference to consider them would be asked for. The officials of the System Federation said that they represented the following unions:

Brotherhood of Railway Clerks,
Brotherhood of Railway Car Men,
International Brotherhood of Blacksmiths,
Boilermakers and Iron Ship Builders' International Union,
International Association of Machinists,
Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers' Alliance,
International Association of Steamfitters,
Painters, Decorators and Paper Hangers' International Union,
Several Federal Labor Unions, composed of helpers and laborers.

When the communication of the System Federation officials was received, it was found that seven of the nine organizations in that body already had contracts with the Illinois Central which required that, when any changes were desired, it was necessary to give thirty days' written notice before any consideration could be given them. Otherwise, the contracts continued indefinitely. Two of the nine unions of the System Federation had no contracts with the Company. The management, therefore, declined to meet the System Federation's Committee because of its contracts with the seven unions. There had been no objections to any of those contracts. They were still in existence and no notice had been given that changes were desired. The Company, therefore, told the System Federation that as the unions with which it had contracts had not given thirty days' notice that changes were desired, no recognition could be given a new organization claiming to speak for them.

The officers of the System Federation then took a strike vote. The employees were told that if a strike was voted it did not mean one would be called, but that it

would be a force to compel the Company officials to treat with the new organization. On this ground, the employees voted to strike when called upon. The vote was not taken according to the laws of the unions with which the Company had contracts. These required secret ballots, which were not taken.

After the strike was voted, the International officials of the unions in the System Federation refused to sanction a walkout until an effort was made to get an amicable settlement. They also investigated the methods pursued by the officials of the System Federation. The International Executive Board of the Machinists then refused emphatically to sanction a strike. It gave the principal reason that the thirty days' notice that a change was desired had not been given. Other International officials also admitted this. After several days of investigation and conferences, the International officials to whom the question of a strike was referred by the System Federation, announced that it would not be indorsed but that another strike vote must be taken. This was to be according to the laws of the respective unions. All of them required a secret ballot. This proved that the International officials were not satisfied with the first vote taken. The letter to the various unions was signed by the respective officials of the nine unions and instructions were given that the vote should be returned not later than October 10, 1911. As the Machinists had refused to sanction a strike, the letter contained this statement and the following questions on which the employees should vote:

"It has recently developed that several of our large organizations are not in position to pay strike benefits, and while their International unions have sanctioned a strike, it is with their moral support only."

Also "That the question has been raised by the Company and by President O'Connell, International President of the Machinists, as to the legality of the notice that was served on the Company June 10th by the officers of the System Federation, and not knowing at this time whether 'we would get the support of the Machinists,

we request each organization to immediately call a special meeting and proceed to take another vote according to your respective constitutions.'"

"In taking the strike vote, the members must have in mind the following points and vote upon each one separately:

"1. Will you vote to enforce recognition of the System Federation?

"2. Will you strike if the Machinists' International refuses to sanction a strike?

"3. Will you strike regardless of financial assistance?

"4. Should the demand of the Company that the thirty days' notice be served be complied with?"

The instructions for a legal strike vote to be taken were sent out September 12th. The Machinists met in convention September 18th. A week later, although it is reported that such action was bitterly fought by the president and many other leaders of the Machinists, the convention, by a close vote, sanctioned a strike on the Harriman Lines, the Illinois Central and the Grand Trunk Pacific. The leaders declared that they would not lead the members employed on the railroads into a strike which they knew would result in defeat, as there was no money to pay strike benefits. It was charged that the Socialists were endeavoring to disrupt the trade union movement by getting as many strikes as possible and they were accused of engineering the trouble on the railroads involved.

It was this action of the Machinists' Convention that brought on the strike, although the employes of the Illinois Central had not yet voted legally on the question of whether they would strike to compel the railroads to recognize the System Federation. There were four questions to vote upon, only one of which, it will be noticed, was settled by the action of the Machinists' Convention.

Just why the strike on the Illinois Central was brought about none of the officials or employes have the least conception. The employes of the road were preparing to vote, as ordered by the International officials. They had

ettled down to consider the situation from the changed conditions into which it had developed. It was no longer a question of "bluffing" the Company to break its contracts with seven unions to make a contract with a new organization, the benefits to be gained from which were problematical. It had become a question of a strike for recognition. No money was involved. But, before the vote could be taken, the strike was ordered. The Company officials had no warning. They were not notified in any way that a strike was to be called. They were waiting for the results of the vote ordered by the International officials, not considering any more than the employes that the action of the Machinists' Convention would bring on a strike on the Illinois Central. The employes were also astounded when given orders to quit work. They had settled down to a belief that there would be no strike, and when it was called they were shocked.

Leading labor officials in the United States are not enthusiastic over the System Federation plan of making contracts. It is the same proposition upon which the Knights of Labor was built and it also wrecked the organization. Each trade has its own environment. The American Federation of Labor, for many years, has refused to adopt a universal trade mark or union label for all trades to use. The reason is that each trade will think the other trades will advertise the label and it will not be necessary for it to do anything; consequently, none would do it.

In the proposed System Federation of the Illinois Central, the trades do not all work along the same lines nor would they when called upon always work as a unit. These labor leaders who look askance at the System Federation say they can see how some trivial dispute in one department can plunge the workmen in all other departments into a disastrous strike. The railway clerks are members of the System Federation of the Illinois Central. They are more or less confidential employes of the railroad. It is an open secret that the workmen in the shops regard the clerks as being nearer to the railroad officials than to them. If the clerks join the union, the railroad officials are forced to believe that they would be more loyal to the union than to the Company. The clerks, therefore, would be an endless source of trouble to both the Company and the

unions. Nevertheless, this state of affairs might be the cause of many strikes over trivial matters made important by the clerks.

The 1894 strike was caused by the refusal of the American Railway Union members to work for any railroad that permitted Pullman cars on its trains. There was no grievance against any of the railroads. The railroad men's strike in Ireland recently was not because of grievances against any railroad company. It was because the railroads hauled lumber for a company not in the good graces of the employees.

The object of the System Federations, as the railroad officials see it, is to so control the labor employed on the railroads that at any time they can dictate the policy of the road if they desire to do so. If the System Federations gain recognition on the railroads, they will be extended to manufactories and then they will demonstrate more fully that they will follow in the steps of the American Railway Union and the railway men of Ireland. If a manufacturer refuses to recognize the factory federation of his employees, then the System Federations of similar workmen on the railroads can refuse to permit his products to be hauled over any line. This is the only logical outcome of the plan of organization proposed. Only four trades were in the first System Federation formed. On the Harriman lines of the West there are five. On the Illinois Central there are nine. The broad principle has been announced by the System Federation of the Illinois Central that "all railroad organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor are eligible for membership." The situation, therefore, presented a more serious aspect to the Illinois Central. The System Federation idea had gained converts and it was fast becoming uncontrollable. The difficulty in harmonizing the complex characters, nationalities, habits, employments and requirements has already become a problem to the organizers. This phase of organization was taken up by the United States Commission that investigated the American Railway Union strike. In its report, it made this reference to unions that had been successful because they had not been formed on the same plan as the American Railway Union:

"The trade unionists argue that their strength lies largely in their comparative freedom from these objections; and they insist that the basis of a successful labor organization must be substantial similarity in interests among the members."

Should the System Federations gain a foothold, they would overshadow and have greater power than the International unions whose members comprise them. The International official would then become a mere clerk with little power over the membership. If it were possible to organize a System Federation on every railroad in the United States to be followed by the formation of a National System Federation, it would simply be the American Railway Union as the latter's organizers hoped to see it. It would have ten thousand times more power than the American Federation of Labor, although with one-sixth membership. The latter organization cannot order a strike. It is a moral influence that seeks to aid all other organizations in its membership in times of trouble. But a National or International System Federation could order strikes on one road or on every road in North America. The roads would be at their mercy, and any manufacturer who might be objectionable to them could be boycotted out of business. In order for the American Railway Union to have been a success, it was necessary to destroy the various brotherhoods of railroad employes. Edgar E. Clark, President of the Order of Railway Conductors, during the American Railway Union strike, in his testimony before the United States Commission, said:

"I believe the majority of the men engaged in any one trade or calling should have a right to fix the conditions under which the men in that trade should work. I think they should have that right uninfluenced by or without any dictation from any other organization or any other class of employes."

Another witness whose union the American Railway Union was trying to disrupt was P. H. Morrissey, then President of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. He told the Commission:

"The American Railway Union came into existence with the declaration that the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and kindred organizations were weak, ineffective, and, in a word, were playing nothing short of a confidence game on the men they assumed to represent. The Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen for a long time has been representing certain classes of men in the train service, and presume to say they have done it as effectively as could be done under trades union principles or as a labor organization.

"The American Railway Union came into the field saying we were weak and ridiculed every earnest, honest method used by our organization to achieve good for the men they represent. When we failed it was a subject for ridicule by the lecturers of the American Railway Union. That naturally produced bitterness."

It is also true as at present that in 1894 many of the unions violated their contracts by going on strike.

The American Railway Union was formed upon much the same theory as the proposed System Federation—"that the trades union idea has ceased to be useful or adequate; that pride of organization, petty jealousies and the conflict of views into which men are trained in separate organizations under different leaders tend to defeat the common object of all and enable the railroads to use such organizations against each other in contention over wages and working conditions; that the interests of each of the railroad employees of the United States as to wages, treatment, hours of labor, legislation, insurance, mutual aid, etc., are common to all, and hence all ought to belong to one organization that shall assert its united strength in the protection of the rights of every member."

The Illinois Central management stood on the thirty day clause of their contracts with seven unions of the System Federation. It had been mutually agreed upon by the unions and railroads and undoubtedly for the same reason—protection against hasty action in an emergency by either party to the contract. If this notice had been given, the management would have had an opportunity

to tell why objection was made to that form of organization. The union officials could be told of the disastrous failures of the past, and the reasons therefor, as well as the demoralizing effects upon labor, the railroads and public. Many of the employes did not realize what the System Federation meant to them and could not in the absence of the usual discussion between the railroad officials and union officials act intelligently upon a subject upon which they were not clearly informed.

Some may ask why conferences were not held with the officials of the System Federation. Since signed contracts have been made by the railroad and employes, both sides have been insistent upon them being respected. The employes have been especially emphatic that the contracts be followed to the letter. Should a contract have been made with the System Federation, any one of the International unions holding a contract with the Company could have charged a breach of faith on the part of the Company.

So far as the System Federation is concerned the Illinois Central management makes no secret of its opposition for the reasons already mentioned. It refuses to be placed in the position of giving any encouragement, even by inference, that will lead its employes to believe it will recognize the Federation. Its hope that the thirty days' notice would be given was to permit it to show the perniciousness and utter impracticability of such a combination of employes. Its position was as much in the interest of the employes as the stockholders. It did not seek a strike. It was believed that the friendly feeling between the Company and employes would not be thus broken. The strike might have been deferred temporarily but its effect at a later date might have caused more concern.

It can readily be seen that this is not a fight of capital against labor. The Illinois Central was willing to fulfill its contracts with the unions. It believed that that method of bargaining was the correct one and had rested secure in the belief that the employes were satisfied.

Neither does the controversy mean the life or death of the crafts, a decrease in wages or the imposition of harsh conditions. Instead it is a defense of the railroads against unjust and unreasonable conditions under which it could not continue to operate successfully.

Public Opinion as Expressed in Leading Newspapers

Thinks I. C. Strike Was Ill Advised

Waterloo, Ia., Times Tribune, Oct 8, 1911.

"It is unfortunate that men who have local interest allow the irresponsible to secure control. They do that by neglecting to attend meetings and to elect the conservative and careful to office," said Most Rev. James J. Keane, archbishop of Dubuque, in an interview last night at the home of Rev. Father J. J. Hanley, when asked his opinion on the strike of the Illinois Central Railway shopmen.

"I am exceedingly sorry that the men have been persuaded to go out," he continued, "as I know from a very thorough canvass of the situation through the west, where the matter is being agitated, that the vast majority of them were not in favor of it. Not only do the men neglect to elect to office the conservative and careful, but by their inattention to the interests of the unions they permit the radical element to advocate and strive for the introduction of impractical principles which are unjust to vested interests of unionism.

"Some of the matters at issue in the present strike are radical, so radical, indeed, that it is difficult to see how the railroad company can yield without capitulating. They demand, as an instance, the time of service and not merit must determine whether a man is to be promoted or not; secondly, that a man's personal record should not at all influence those who are to employ him; and, thirdly, that the entire body should be made to suffer in order to promote the presumed interests of a particular craft.

"I believe in unionism; I believe that men have a perfect right to unite to protect their interests, just as capital combines to promote its interests. Men have a perfect right to a wage which will be sufficient to support their families in comparative comfort and to make some provision, provided they be economical and industrious, for the morrow. But the good which unionism serves to promote cannot possibly justify the introduction into the practical conduct of unionism of principles which are unjust. I fear that some of the principles with which they are contending are such, and I believe that the superior minded, upon deliberation, will have the courage to repudiate what is wrong and to abandon a contention for what is not just. I expect that within a short

time a goodly number of men who have local interest will have the courage to return to work."

Archbishop Keane is an able minded man and speaks upon the strike situation after having made a careful study of the controversy which is now so disturbing to the commercial interests of the localities affected by the strike. He spoke with a firmness which indicated his true convictions on the subject, and was very emphatic in scoring the inattentiveness of the conservative element of the union in not bringing their influence to bear to avert the strike.

More Striking These Times

The Bessemer (Alabama) Weekly, Saturday, Sept. 30, 1911.

The clerks on the Illinois Central, Southern Division, have entered on a strike, and shopmen at various points in sympathy with them or on account of rejection of their demands, are going out and joining them in the strike. The clerks seem to be at sea as to why they are striking or abandoning their positions. They are all under contract with the Company to give 30 days' notice if they wish to rescind the contract. But that fact does not seem to merit the slightest consideration upon their part. While it is obligatory upon and enforceable with the Company it is not worth the paper upon which it is written in binding or exacting responsibility from the clerks.

Up about Cairo, the clerks claim that they struck because the railroad company discharged for cause three clerks at East St. Louis, and sending three clerks from Mounds, Ills., to replace them. On arrival they refused to go to work and they were discharged, the Company refusing them further employment.

At the lower end of the line, at New Orleans, the striking clerks say they struck to force the Company to recognize their union.

It seems for a wonder that the strikers are not in this instance chanting the refrain, "Higher wages and better conditions." Their wages must be pretty good and satisfactory where they will voluntarily quit their employment or go on a strike and not demand an increase.

As a matter of course the clerks if not under contracts have complete right to quit work or go on a strike at any time. But it looks a little singular if clerks or any one having lucrative employment during these hard and depressing times, would risk losing their employment or forfeiting their positions because five hundred miles from there three men were discharged for cause, or because their employer declines to recognize an organization among them that simply menaced his interests and questioned the management of his business.

However, "it is according to one's liking," as the old woman said when she kissed her cat. If they wanted to strike for such reason, that was their lookout. If the management of the Company has the American spirit, their striking simply permanently severs their relation with the Company for all time to come. They are of a class that cannot be trusted, or relied upon. Their allegiance is not to those who employ them, but to some so-called labor boss. They would absolutely sacrifice the interest of their employer at any time at the behest of some union boss, whom, out of their wages they keep in idleness to guide them as if they were driven cattle.

In the instance of the present strike here is an undeniable proposition. That unless resort is had to lawlessness, to brutal force, intimidation, etc., the strike will be an abject failure, the places abandoned by the clerks will be filled by others eager for employment and the regular routine of the business of the Illinois Central will hardly be disturbed.

The strikers started out scouting all intention of or idea of lawlessness or of any interference with the business of the Company. But the moment they saw others entering the employment of the Company, doing the work they had abandoned, the inherent union deviltry in them asserted itself and they commenced brutal attacks upon the new employes of the Company.

It is this feature and practice of unionism that should damn it in the estimation of any just minded man and banish it from American soil. It is an organization which, if it ever reaches power, will destroy all semblance of American liberty.

Employers cannot afford to yield to union aggressions and tyranny. If the first surrender is made abject and humiliating surrender will follow, and the chains are riveted.

Even the blind can see the tendency and forecast the purpose of modern unionism. It is to absolutely control industry; to form a ponderous, irresistible trust to which it makes subject all other interests.

Can American citizens stand the outcome? Isn't it better to check it now, when it is comparatively a trickling stream, than to permit it to become a roaring flood.

The remedy for the employers is the individual control. Pick his best and most reliable men and contract for their life work, thus insuring permanency in their employment. They will form a nucleus upon which he can rely if labor disturbances arise. He can well afford such higher wages and old age consideration for their loyalty, and reliance will always count as a big asset in business. Else the large employer must insist that organizations of his employes must be incorporated, that they be legally liable for all infractions of contracts and for all malfeasance of members.

Neither Manager Kruttschnitt of the Harriman lines nor the Illinois Central can afford to yield to the demands of the union clerks or of the confederated shop men. They cannot afford to surrender the control and management of great interests, involving investments of hundreds of millions of dollars to employes like clerks, or shopmen like blacksmiths, tin workers, machinists, etc. If the latter do not wish to work under their management it is their right to retire and seek more satisfactory employment.

But in severing their relations of employer and employe, if they be men and not poltroons and cowards, they will look to other sources for their accommodations, to other more satisfactory alignments and not resort to lawlessness and brute force to coerce compliance with their demands.

The Illinois Central at this writing seems to be having but little difficulty in employing such help or labor as they need, while those who struck or quit their employment have no assurance but idleness as the result of their action.

Railroad Clerks' Strike

The Daily Register, Clarksdale, Miss., September 27.

About eight or a dozen men went out when the clerks' strike was called in this city on Monday afternoon, but so far as we are able to learn, matters are progressing about as usual at the depot. It has thrown additional work on local agent J. W. McNair, but he is filling the position very satisfactorily and seems to be handling the freight and other departments to good advantage. We feel sure that he is inconvenienced to some extent and there might possibly be some delay in the arrival of freights until matters adjust themselves, but we have been informed that no inconvenience to amount to anything has been caused by the strike. The places of the strikers are being filled in Memphis and other places with unusual promptness and will doubtless be filled here as soon as they can be secured. The REGISTER always feels kindly towards organized labor and naturally likes to see the working man get a fair deal, but we are sorry indeed that they saw fit to strike at this season of the year.

It doubtless means meat and bread to a number of them and might involve outsiders if it were to continue to any great length, not saying anything about the loss of perishable goods, delay in freight and other things attributable to a strike. When a man has a wife and several sweet little children depending upon his labors, he should be exceedingly careful and think long and seriously before becoming involved in a strike. In many instances, people have been forced to move out of the community as a consequence of being involved in same, their children were deprived of the advantage of a good school and his good wife

the loss of the friendly ties of neighbors and social intercourse, and many times they have gone from bad to worse on account of an unwise move on the part of the family.

Of course in many instances the labor unions are just in their demands, but in this case they usually receive what is due them, or else some satisfactory agreement is reached before serious trouble occurs, but sometimes they overstep the bounds of reason in the demands made upon their superiors and some poor unfortunate person has to suffer and bear the consequences of their folly. As a newspaper we unhesitatingly say that the employes as a whole of the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley are among the cleverest people in the world and have been faithful always to every trust reposed in them. On the other hand the railroad company is human and is subject to the same conditions that an ordinary citizen has to pass through and usually has their share of troubles, and we are also in favor of giving them their just dues and according them the treatment they deserve in every instance. We sincerely trust that the strike will be amicably settled before any damage occurs and before the families of those interested will be made to suffer. It is always well to think well before taking a step in the dark and it pays to do right all the time.

Peoria, Ill., Transcript, Sept. 13, 1911.

As a rule the ordinary citizen wastes but little sympathy on the railroads. But the fact that the carriers have recently been inhibited from raising freight rates, compelled to lower passenger tariffs in many instances and at the same time virtually forced to raise wages in many departments arouses the American sense of fair play to protest against their being made the victim of a strike without the gravest provocation.

The Railway Labor Combination

New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1911.

That consolidation of railway employes' labor unions, recognition of which the Illinois Central Railroad and the other so-called Harriman lines in the West are refusing corresponds in a sense to the consolidation which, in the case of capital, is regarded as dangerous and against public policy. Even the arguments for substituting one federation of railway employes to conduct collective bargaining with the railroads for the seven crafts with which the corporations now make contracts sound strangely like those which are offered to justify capitalistic concentration. The irony of being told that a single federation was required for the sake of "economy" must have struck some of the negotiators who represented the railroads in the recent conferences.

And the public has fully as much reason to regard with anxiety the proposal to concentrate into a single organization authority over the labor engaged in the indispensable public service performed by the railroads as it might have to fear plans for extensive railroad combinations, like that of the Northern Securities Company, which was condemned by the law. One of the railroad presidents speaks of the power which would be in the hands of a combination of all classes of railway employes, those in the shops as well as those engaged in actual operation of the roads, as a power to "throttle commerce." That is no exaggeration, so greatly would the relation of the railroads to their workmen be changed through the proposed labor combination. And it is to be remembered that the combination would be totally irresponsible. It would not be incorporated. It would not be governed by any of the public service legislation of the country, which has gone far in making capital engaged in performing a public service recognize that it is "affected with a public interest," but which has totally failed to hold the labor combinations among public service employes to a similar responsibility.

Moreover, this proposed combination of labor unions lacks the justification which all fair-minded people concede to exist in the case of the unions themselves. Collective bargaining is necessary for the protection of labor. But the organization of each craft by itself and its separate recognition by the railroads has proved adequate to secure for the railroad employe fair treatment. Railroad workmen are well paid. Advances in wages have been made frequently, the latest advance occurring last year at a time when the railroads had not completely recovered from the effects of the panic and when their earnings were falling. Thus the public can see no reason why increased power in bargaining with the railroads is requisite to the welfare of the employes, and it can see abundant reasons for regarding with anxiety the placing of such power as is now proposed over an indispensable public service in the hands of an irresponsible and legally unregulated labor combination.

The Ill-Timed, Ill-Advised Strike

Chicago Record-Herald, Oct. 1, 1911.

It would be unprofitable to discuss again the issues of the general strike of the shopmen or mechanical craftsmen on the Harriman and Illinois Central lines. The strikers had ample time for deliberation, and their decision is, at any rate, not a hasty one. The paramount question is the recognition of the federation of the shopmen's unions, and the railroads have not taken their position against recognition without a careful consideration of the pros and cons.

These are the facts of the situation. It is likewise a fact

that shippers' sympathy is not, and is not likely to be, on the side of the strikers. Several impartial commercial bodies, after a thorough discussion of the issue by representatives of both sides, adopted resolutions indorsing the attitude of the railroads. Although several roads have recognized the federation and treated with it, the business community generally is undoubtedly inclined to regard the strike as radical and unwise.

One more fact may be candidly recognized. The strikers cannot really regard the time and industrial conditions as auspicious. Railroads have had to lay off men and order reductions of expenses. Many railroad employes are out of work. The roads will suffer no immediate inconvenience, and the engineers, firemen, conductors and brakemen are not likely to become involved in the struggle. The men who urged the strike obeyed passion and resentment rather than the voice of sober, sound sense. They did not profit by the lesson of the Irish general strike, which collapsed in a few days, or of the British railroad strikes, which were called off when public sentiment emphatically registered disapproval of them and demanded official inquiry and mediation.

An Ill-Advised Strike

Chicago Inter Ocean, Oct. 3, 1911.

From any viewpoint save that of the dreamer of socialistic millenniums the strike of shop workers on what are popularly known as the "Harriman" railway lines must be regarded as ill-advised.

With short crops, with business lagging in almost all lines, with the general reluctance to engage in new enterprises, it is evident that for some months there will be less work for the railways, and so less income from which to pay out wages.

Aside from the demand for increased wages, which on the Illinois Central alone is figured to mean an increase of expenditure of \$2,000,000 a year, some of the demands of the strikers read as if formulated by socialistic theorists totally ignorant of the actual conditions of railway work.

With the national government on the one hand practically prohibiting the railways from raising the price of the only thing they have to sell, when the railways are required on the other to pay more for what they have to buy, the railway industry is put between the upper and nether millstones.

What the strikers are really fighting against is not so much the railway management as the national government in its responsiveness to radical agitation for governmental regulation

and control of business, regardless of natural laws of supply and demand.

Under such conditions something is bound to break and large numbers of innocent persons are bound to get hurt. It is a pitiful situation for these deluded men and their families, but it is what is always likely to happen when we insist on being governed overmuch.

Avert the Strike

New Orleans Item, September 10, 1911.

The ominous announcement that the shopmen of the Illinois Central have been ordered by leaders of their union to hold themselves in readiness to strike, can be received only with a feeling of deep regret.

It is doubtful if any strike ever did any ultimate good. But it is a dead certainty that there never was a strike that did not do a vast deal of immediate harm and frequently cause widespread suffering. There have been no exceptions. The strike of the I. C. shopmen would be no exception.

Those who are shaping this threatened industrial catastrophe, its LEADERS, should bear this truth in mind. They can not, knowing as they must know, where the blow of the disaster would fall the heaviest, conscientiously order a strike. It is a case of being honest with themselves. The strike would not harm THEM. They are the leaders, not the laborers. It WOULD harm those that bear the burdens. Worst of all, the full force of the evil would fall upon the wives and children of the strikers. It would also bear heavily upon the public, most heavily, of course, upon those least able to bear it.

There are great evils, we know, which sometimes SEEM to justify other evils to remedy them. It is doubtful if this is ever really true, but some exceptional instances of grievous wrong and oppression give at least excuse for resistance which is itself destructive.

After a careful and impartial study of this controversy, we can find nothing that would justify a strike at the present time. Judging from the expressions of all sorts of papers, representing all sorts of opinions, and from the talk of the people, we believe that the public would set this strike down, if it should occur now, as unjustifiable. If the PUBLIC is not with the strikers, their strike is utterly doomed to failure in advance.

In the present case a statement of the various contentions has been issued by the railroad. It seemed to impress the country as fair. The other side has let this statement STAND UN-

ANSWERED, so far as we know, for many days, though the shop-workers have been free to use the press to answer and offer the public what justification they can for their attitude.

If the new federation leaders CAN NOT answer, their case is closed, so far as the public is concerned.

With the facts before it, the public is inclined to believe that only a few of the organization's demands are justified at all or even open to serious debate. The rest, in the absence of any explanation from the complaining parties, appears UNTENABLE from any point of view. None of the demands, so far as we can see, is based on any complaint strong enough to justify a strike at this time. The question of recognition of the new Federation is the strongest claim, but even this is DEBATABLE, in the PRESENT INSTANCE in several particulars, and coupled with the other demands could hardly be granted by the railroads unqualifiedly.

We believe that this diagnosis represents fairly well the opinion of the public in general. If it is unfair to the workmen, it is the fault of the Federation leaders for not explaining and justifying their claims before the public.

The ITEM has taken neither side because it is in no position to judge the merits of the case. All that we claim is that nothing which the Federation has presented SO FAR would justify a STRIKE at this time.

Aside from the direct privation that would inevitably come to hundreds vitally concerned, in the event of a walk-out, it would be committing a serious offense against society and business at large to tie up a great railroad system unless a great principle or a great wrong were forcing the workers to this last resort. Neither of these seems to be involved in the present dispute.

Have the labor leaders a RIGHT to impose this calamity upon their unions and upon the innocent public? Have the railroads stubbornly made themselves party to wrong by unfairness to their men? We can not conscientiously say "yes" to either of these questions.

The ITEM's attitude toward labor and labor unions is too well known to subject it to the charge of indifference to the interests of the worker or of favoritism to railroad corporations. Labor has ample cause for just complaint against corporation-management in many ways. What is said here is primarily in the interests of peace and the general public, which of course, includes organized labor. We merely assert our belief that the Federation, in this instance, has not made out a case that would justify a strike, and that a strike now would most probably do the cause of labor great harm.

Promoters of this proposed strike should remember the horror of the great Pennsylvania anthracite coal strike. There are

many other similar horrors they could remember, but that one is enough. They should take honest counsel with themselves and then do their duty as their conscience dictates.

On the other hand, the railway officials should remember the deserved public contumely in which was held the man who stood out against the anthracite miners.

A hastily-advised strike is the surest means of slaying public support of the strikers' cause, and high-handed methods in dealing with the demands of labor condemn corporations in the eyes of the people. Both capital and labor must remember that the PUBLIC, in the end, is the FINAL JUDGE and EXECUTIONER.

There are few troubles that can not be averted. This strike is one that can be averted, and the railway and strike officials should see to it, in the face of their obligations to the public, that it IS averted.

As to a General Railroad Strike

New Orleans, La., Picayune, October 11, 1911.

The statement that many thousands of railroad employes have struck, or are striking, in order to force their employers to acknowledge and accept the authority of an organization which is a federation of all the other labor unions, announces the attempt to establish an additional and more powerful consolidation of the forces of the labor element in our population.

The railroads employ among the members of their working forces persons skilled in almost every branch of mechanical labor. They embrace all the trades that are combined in the building and repairing of railroad locomotives, cars and the various appliances that are used in the operation of railway transportation. The men engaged in these various occupations are organized in their specific trade unions, the blacksmiths in one, the machinists in another, the carpenters in another, the painters in another, and the upholsterers in another, and so on.

The employers have to deal with each of these trade unions separately, but now it is proposed to federate the numerous unions into a single body, controlled by a management which speaks for all, and whose command all must obey. Heretofore it has been possible when some controversy arose with the blacksmiths, only they had to be settled with, while all the other trades were not complaining and were apparently satisfied, but under the general federation proposition, if a blacksmith should complain of his relations with his employer, all the members of all the federated unions would be bound to take his part, and if ordered to do so, to strike in his behalf.

Such a proposition not only vastly increases the domination of the labor element over the employers, but it establishes an absolute despotism over every member in the great consolidated federation, since thousands of workers whose labor is necessary for the support of their families must leave their employment, abandon their livelihood and subject themselves to conditions of complete dependence because a single individual in the entire federation is engaged in a controversy with an employer somewhere.

Public sympathy has been repeatedly with strikers where they were moving for higher wages or shorter hours of labor, but in the present case no such important interests are at issue. The demand is that the entire organized working population shall give up the special interests of their particular trade or calling and place themselves under the control of a governing power made up of a small oligarchy of individuals, or even under the domination of a single autocratic ruler.

The common idea is that in the United States a labor union is a thoroughly democratic organization, in which every measure is settled by a popular vote, but according to Henry White, former organizer and president of the Garment Workers' Union of the American Federation of Labor, all such organizations are controlled by an autocrat or an oligarchy, in both of which he was most prominent. Writing in the *World's Work* for October, he says:

"The term 'leader' is tabooed in union circles. However such a person may be recognized on the outside he has no existence inside. The officials are just 'servants' and the will of the mass presumably alone leads. This latter concept is encouraged by the union heads, who at all times wish the members to feel that they merely execute their wishes, especially so when the results are not fortunate. The one ambition of the delegates at the national union conventions, as I observed, was to circumvent the democratic desires of the mass, to have their own way while seemingly consulting their constituents. I observed, too, that the delegates and officers encouraged the democratic sentiment in order to make things surer for themselves. By securing the apparent approval of the body of the members, they could dodge blame for any ill-conceived move."

In levying an assessment, which is a very unpopular move, the method which insures success, according to the writer quoted, is as follows:

"Now the 'self-governing masses' were as averse to assessments as the leaders were in favor of them. How to get around this unfounded prejudice became the topic of a long discussion. An executive session, that is a session in which all transactions are secret and unrecorded, was called. There each delegate was pledged to a plan to carry a referendum vote in favor of the question by causing a small attendance at the meetings at which

the proposition was to be voted on, and by counting the absentees as voting in the affirmative. The national executive board being the court of last resort on all points of law, the success of the plan was never in doubt. Before the motion was carried every aspiring delegate had to be assured privately where he 'came in' on the jobs. In the discussion of the proposition of imposing a tax this way, the argument was made and generally assented to that the 'benighted masses' had to be helped against their will, even by strategy and force. Since the members were unwilling to pay for the self-sacrificing work done for them, a way had to be found."

But the fact remains that the American people are not nearly so much devoted to democracy and popular control as they are represented to be. Great numbers of the alleged best citizens in state and municipal elections do not go to the polls, and in most cases they are controlled by their political leaders. Continuing the quotation from the writer mentioned above:

"The selection of officers was simplified by the predigestive process. Before this order of business was reached, it was known pretty well who the nominees would be and what votes they were to get. The canvass, started far in advance of the meetings by the traveling agents of the head office, had been so thorough as to leave nothing to do but to go through the routine of the elections. At all the conventions, excepting the earlier ones, the sameness of the representations from year to year was a marked feature. The faces at one convention could be counted on to appear at the next. In the personnel of the national officers, there was also this peculiarity. It seemed as if a settled class of placeholders had grown up, a condition best adapted for the development of a governing trust."

In view of the fact that the labor union has become one of the established features of the modern industrial situation, it is naturally an entirely legitimate subject for discussion and examination. Powerful as it is to dominate some important industries, its weak spot is that it embraces only a limited number of the working people.

This is because if it attempted to include all, it would be impossible to find employment save for a comparative few. There are some 20,000,000 of work people in the United States, while the labor unions include some 2,000,000 or 3,000,000. But at the present time the organization exists only in cities, and mostly among the skilled laborers in various trades, but additions to the skilled ranks are constantly coming in from the country places and villages, and the numbers may become greater than the unions can handle.

This is the reason why in some of the strike cases the employers can fill the places of strikers with skilled help. There is little doubt that in a strike of all the locomotive engineers in this

country, railroad traffic would come to a dead stand, but in the matter of clerks and skilled mechanics, not all are members of the union.

In all probability, in case of a complete stoppage of railroad transportation, the suffering for food and other necessities would be so great and so general that the railroads would be forced to resume traffic at any cost, or the National Government would take charge, and while such a calamitous happening is by no means in sight, it would be the summit of wisdom to revive our interior waterway transportation.

The Railroad Strike as a Local Issue

New Orleans, La., Picayune, October 11, 1911.

The interstate commerce feature of the railroad strike makes it different from the ordinary strike incidents, in the fact that the power and prerogative of the United States come into play.

The right to strike, the right of men employed by the day, or for longer terms, to quit work at any moment it may please them, has been established by custom and recognized by the courts without regard to any violation of contract, and under ordinary circumstances some strikers have not hesitated to take active measures, sometimes violent, to prevent other persons from being employed in the places they had left.

But in the present case any attempt to interfere with the employing of other laborers by the railroad companies comes under the prohibitions of the Sherman law. It is held to be a combination in restraint of interstate commerce, and those convicted under it are liable to fine and imprisonment.

The railroad companies here and elsewhere have obtained from the United States courts writs of injunction to prevent active interference with their business, and violators of those injunctions will get into trouble with "Uncle Sam." It is therefore worth while to take note of that fact.

If this were a strike for better wages, for shorter hours of labor and other burdens on the employes, the strikers would be sure of a large amount of popular sympathy. It is nothing of the sort, however, but only a movement to place a vast body of work people, their daily living and that of their families in the grip of a small group or oligarchy of managers or monarchs, which is a matter with which the general public can have no special concern.

However, whatever may be the reason, the strikers are only exercising their right to stop work and to stop earning whenever it shall please them. The Company, at the same time, is privileged to employ other workers in the places of the strikers, and this is one of the rare cases in which they are protected by the laws and power of the United States.